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New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail ..... (Malaysia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Baumanis (Latvia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 21

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(a) Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Report of the Secretary-General (A/51/172)

(b) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

(Reports of the Secretary-General (A/51/213, A/51/303, A/51/315, A/51/326, A/51/353, A/51/356, A/51/464, A/51/528, A/51/560)

Draft resolutions (A/51/L.22 and A/51/L.24)

(d) Assistance to the Palestinian people

Report of the Secretary-General (A/51/171)

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Bulgaria to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.22.

Mr. Raichev (Bulgaria): Allow me on behalf of my delegation to express our appreciation for having been given the opportunity to address the General Assembly on such an important agenda item. I will concentrate particularly on the issue of economic assistance to States affected by the implementation of the Security Council resolutions imposing sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

The special economic problems arising for third States as a result of Security Council sanctions have been a subject of intensive discussion in the United Nations during the past few years. Its consideration in the General Assembly, the Security Council and other relevant United Nations bodies is an acknowledgement that the United Nations needs to intensify its efforts to address more effectively the economic problems of third States affected by sanctions imposed by the Security Council, and has resulted in the adoption of a number of important resolutions and decisions.

In this connection, I would like to mention in particular the adoption of General Assembly resolutions 48/210 of 21 December 1993, 49/21 A of 2 December 1994, and 50/58 E of 12 December 1995, appealing to Member States and to the relevant organs and bodies of the United Nations system to provide on an urgent basis assistance to the States affected by the strict implementation of the sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

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By these resolutions the Assembly has recognized the severity of the economic problems of the affected third States and the need to mobilize the efforts of the international community, in compliance with the Charter, in order to address the difficulties experienced by those States. The steps undertaken in this context are outlined in the report of the Secretary-General (A/51/356) submitted under this agenda item at the current session. I would like to express our appreciation for the preparation of this report, which in our view contains useful conclusions and recommendations.

I take this opportunity also to commend the efforts of international financial institutions, other international organizations and Member States which responded to the Secretary-General's appeal to take the special economic problems of the affected countries into account in their support programmes. We also note with appreciation continued attention on the part of intergovernmental and regional organizations, in particular the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union, as well as the support rendered through the Central European Initiative.

The successful conclusion of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Annexes thereto initialled on 21 November 1995 in Dayton, Ohio, and signed on 14 December 1995 in Paris ended the long and destructive conflict in the former Yugoslavia and opened up the possibility of starting the process of post-conflict peace-building and the lasting stabilization and recovery of the whole region. The suspension and subsequent termination of the Security Council sanctions were an important element in this process. We welcome and support these developments.

At the same time, it must be recognized that while the sanctions regime was lifted after the conclusion of the Peace Agreement, the long-term impact of the sanctions on the economies of the affected third States still persists. I do not intend to go into details on the continuing negative consequences of the sanctions for the national economies of those States, since detailed data on the matter has already been presented on a number of occasions. A detailed analysis of the situation with regard to Bulgaria is contained also in our national communication on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/58 E addressed to the Secretary-General and circulated as an official document of the General Assembly and the Security Council (A/51/330-S/1996/721). Similar documents have also been presented by other affected countries. The continuing economic problems for the affected third States and the need for continued support by the international community are also described in the report of the Secretary-General (A/51/356).

Having said that, I take this opportunity to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.22, entitled "Economic assistance to States affected by the implementation of the Security Council resolutions imposing sanctions on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia". The following Member States have joined in sponsoring this draft resolution: Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Bulgaria.

The draft resolution retains the main thrust of previous resolutions on the issue but reflects new developments during the past year. It expresses concern at the persisting impact on the economies of the affected third States in the post-sanctions period and reaffirms the continuing need for an adequate response from the international community and the relevant United Nations organs, programmes and specialized agencies, including the international financial institutions. The draft resolution also reaffirms the continuing need for practical measures to mitigate the negative impact of the sanctions on the affected States by supporting their financial stabilization, developing the transport and communications infrastructure, promoting trade and increasing their active involvement in the post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation of the region. Particular attention is paid to the possibilities opened up for strengthening multilateral regional cooperation in all spheres, as outlined in the Royaumont Platform for Action of the European Union and the Sofia Declaration of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the countries of the region on Good Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in the Balkans, including the realization of cross-border infrastructure projects, the promotion of trade and investments, and so on.

We are hopeful that given the importance and magnitude of the problem I have outlined, the draft resolution will receive the unanimous support of the Member States of the United Nations and will be adopted by consensus.

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of Cameroon to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.24.

Mr. Mpay (Cameroon) (*interpretation from French*): I am speaking on behalf of the African Group to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.24 on "Assistance to the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Liberia". As we are all aware, Liberia has been one of the hardest hit African countries for several years now. It has suffered a fratricidal civil war which has undermined all the country's institutions, caused severe damage to the physical and social infrastructure, driven hundreds of thousands of refugees out of the country and given rise to many displaced persons within its frontiers. This situation has brought tremendous suffering to the Liberian people, who are also facing serious economic problems. The member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), I am pleased to say, have taken a number of positive initiatives designed to bring peace and reconciliation to the country.

We are aware of the work that the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) has done in Liberia with regard to peace and security in the country. Thanks to its presence, Liberia has not disintegrated. We also welcome the efforts of the Heads of State of ECOWAS for their peacemaking efforts which culminated in the appointment of Mrs. Ruth Sando Perry as Chairman of the Council of State. The various factions in Liberia are fighting for power. The agreement reached in Abuja was able to elicit unanimous approval for Mrs. Perry to become Chairman of the Council of State.

Draft resolution A/51/L.24 takes into account the overall situation in the country and provides for the measures needed to enable the country to free itself from its difficult economic situation. The draft resolution is almost the same as last year's resolution except for a few amendments which take into account developments in the situation in the country. Thus, in the second preambular paragraph the draft resolution takes note of Security Council resolution 1071 (1996) of 30 August 1996, in which the Council welcomed the agreement reached in Abuja in 1996 which extended the 1995 Abuja agreement until 15 June 1997. It remains to be seen if the various faction chiefs respect the agreement. In the fifth preambular paragraph, the draft resolution welcomes the induction into office on 3 September 1996 of Mrs. Ruth Sando Perry as the new Chairman of the Council of State and her efforts to restore the cohesiveness and authority of the Council.

As the Assembly is aware, the pillaging that broke out in August this year caused enormous damage in the country. Therefore the operative paragraphs of the draft resolution call on the international community to provide assistance to the Liberian Government to enable it to extricate itself from its current difficult situation.

In operative paragraph 1, the draft resolution expresses gratitude to all States and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations that have rendered assistance to the Liberian National Transitional Government and urges them to continue their efforts. Of course, the draft resolution commends the Secretary-General for his continuing efforts to mobilize relief and rehabilitation assistance for Liberia. It also calls upon all States and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to continue to provide Liberia with technical, financial and other assistance for the repatriation and resettlement of Liberian refugees, returnees and displaced persons and the rehabilitation of combatants so as to facilitate the restoration of peace and normalcy in Liberia.

The Assembly is aware that the Trust Fund for Liberia was set up to provide assistance to the country. The draft resolution therefore reiterates its appeal to all States to contribute generously to the Fund.

The draft resolution is very realistic in that we know that humanitarian organizations in Liberia are often the target of attacks. Thus in operative paragraph 5 the draft resolution deplores all attacks against and intimidation of personnel of the United Nations, its specialized agencies, non-governmental organizations and ECOMOG, as well as the looting of their equipment, supplies and personal property. It calls on all factions and their leaders to respect fully the security and safety of all personnel of the United Nations, its specialized agencies, non-governmental organizations and ECOMOG by ensuring their complete freedom of movement throughout Liberia.

The Secretary-General is requested in paragraph 7 of this draft resolution (A/51/L.24) to continue his efforts to mobilize all possible assistance within the United Nations system to help the Government of Liberia in its reconstruction and development efforts. The draft resolution also requests the Secretary-General to undertake, when conditions permit and in close collaboration with the Liberian authorities, an overall assessment of needs with the objective of holding a round-table conference of donors for the reconstruction and development of Liberia.

This is the substance of the draft resolution for adoption before the General Assembly. As I said at the beginning of my remarks, Liberia is a country which has been suffering from tremendous economic problems and unspeakable human suffering. That is why the countries of Africa wish to see this draft resolution adopted by the Assembly by consensus.

Mr. Campbell (Ireland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The following associated countries have aligned themselves with this statement: Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia. Liechtenstein and Romania have also aligned themselves with this statement.

The situation in the Great Lakes region of Africa, now so dramatically changed in the space of a few days, underlines the importance of being prepared to respond in a timely, coordinated and effective manner to humanitarian crises in order to alleviate the suffering of our fellow human beings.

At a special meeting of European development and humanitarian aid ministers to consider the humanitarian crisis in central Africa, the European Union expressed full support for the efforts of the United Nations, regional leaders and the Organization of African Unity to facilitate a peaceful and comprehensive resolution of the conflict, and reaffirmed the commitment of the Union to assist in every way possible.

The ministers further stressed the need to work in a coordinated manner with the international humanitarian agencies and with non-governmental organizations to ensure an effective humanitarian response to the crisis, and underlined the coordinating role of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in the United Nations system.

The troika of European Union ministers and the European Commission subsequently visited Zaire and Rwanda in order to acquire first-hand information on the situation. The ministers found that the United Nations agencies, the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) and the non-governmental organizations were well prepared, under the prevailing circumstances, for the tasks of delivering the necessary humanitarian relief and the voluntary repatriation of the refugees.

The situation has, of course, been changing in a way that was difficult to predict only a few days ago. Developments are being monitored at the highest level in the European Union and every effort is being made to provide urgently required assistance to aid agencies now in Rwanda to take care of the returned refugees and support their resettlement and to assist the refugees and displaced persons in eastern Zaire.

The European Union welcomes the promptness with which the United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Flash Appeal for the Great Lakes Region in Response to the Crisis in Eastern Zaire for resources was launched and has already made initial responses, both individually and through the European Community. In addition, the European Union attaches the highest importance to the strengthening of the monitoring of human rights.

The crisis in the Great Lakes region has challenged the international community to provide effective humanitarian assistance, as it must seek to do in all emergencies which demand an international response. An even greater and more enduring challenge is to work to prevent natural disasters and complex emergencies and to facilitate, to the extent possible, a smooth transition from humanitarian assistance towards rehabilitation and long-term development, including through taking a long-term development perspective, even in the early stages of reacting to emergencies.

The Secretary-General's report (A/51/172) addressed both the ongoing efforts to strengthen the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance and the related process of review of the United Nations system's capacity to respond, which was initiated by the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session in 1995. I addressed both these issues in some detail in my statement on behalf of the European Union at the Economic and Social Council earlier this year, and I intend today to concentrate on a number of areas of particular concern to us.

Some progress has been made by the United Nations system on strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance, but it is obvious that greater efforts are needed to improve the system's capacity to respond effectively, especially in the field. We feel that a number of the mechanisms mandated under General Assembly resolution 46/182 (1991) to help strengthen coordination could be used more effectively.

The consolidated inter-agency appeals process has worked adequately, but could be improved through more coherence in presentations and humanitarian strategies based on greater prioritization. We urge the agencies involved to intensify their cooperation with the

Department of Humanitarian Affairs to work towards a more effective process.

The other resource mobilization tool created to help ensure a timely response — that is, the Central Emergency Revolving Fund — is operating as it was expected to and has shown its value again in the present crisis. We note that there are still some problems with the effective utilization and prompt replenishment of the Fund and we urge those agencies involved to make reimbursements as a matter of urgency so as to preserve the essential character of the Fund, which is its revolving nature.

A common understanding of shared objectives by the agencies involved and a willingness to support the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs are crucial to ensuring an effective, timely and coordinated response to emergencies. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee has a central part to play in the process of defining the role of each of the bodies involved and their relationships with each other and with the United Nations system as a whole.

The European Union stresses again the importance it attaches to the review process initiated under Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56. We encourage the relevant agencies and their governing bodies to complete their reviews of individual capacities in good time, to keep in mind the overarching theme, which is a review of the capacity of the system as a whole, and to seek to give coherent guidance to the system. All the reviews should be completed in time to allow the Secretary-General to draw on their content and recommendations when preparing his report for the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in 1997.

The uncertain financial situation of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, where only 25 per cent of the resources needed for its functioning comes from the regular budget of the United Nations, continues to give cause for serious concern. We strongly support the appropriation of greater resources to Department of Humanitarian Affairs from the regular budget for the next biennium. We also encourage the broadening of the donor base by appealing to non-traditional donors to support the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the overall work of the United Nations in the field of humanitarian emergencies, whether natural disasters or complex emergencies.

The safety, security and dignity of all people involved in emergency situations should be a priority at all times. The increasing lack of respect for humanitarian norms and principles is a cause for serious concern, as are the threats to the security and lives of personnel in the field. The ratification by Member States of the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel as soon as possible would be a step in the right direction. In cases of conflict, the provisions of international humanitarian law apply, and they must be respected by all concerned.

Allow me to use this occasion to address briefly a procedural matter under this item. While recognizing the needs of individual countries and regions, the European Union remains concerned about the large number of draft resolutions appealing for special economic assistance which are submitted under this agenda item. We commend the efforts which have been made to streamline the texts and to biennialize when appropriate. We appeal to those States involved to abide by the spirit of General Assembly resolution 50/227 when texts are being drafted, and we look forward to discussing, later in the fifty-first session, ways to improve further the decision-making processes of the Assembly.

Finally, let me reaffirm that the European Union remains committed to responding to the fullest extent possible to the plight of people in emergency situations. The response capacity of the international community can and should be improved in order, first of all, to alleviate the suffering of those affected by natural disasters and complex emergencies and, secondly, to avoid the wasteful use of resources. We expect all those involved in the provision of emergency humanitarian assistance in the United Nations system to work together to produce a substantive report and recommendations for consideration by the Economic and Social Council next year. The United Nations system must meet the challenges it faces if it is to continue to receive the support of Governments in this crucial area of international cooperation. The European Union will continue to support all efforts to strengthen the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance.

Mr. Aass (Norway): Norway welcomes the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General, presented to the Economic and Social Council at its last session, and now to the General Assembly, concerning strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance within the United Nations system. We appreciate the thorough and systematic work of the various United Nations organizations as well as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in following up Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56 as

regards the review of responsibilities and capacities of the organizations in responding to humanitarian situations.

The Executive Boards or Committees of the United Nations Children's Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Food Programme and the World Health Organization have all held substantial discussions on their role in humanitarian emergencies. This ongoing process should provide an excellent basis for fruitful discussions at the next session of the Economic and Social Council.

Norway has noted with great satisfaction that the issue of assistance to and protection of internally displaced persons has been a subject of debate in the follow-up of the Economic and Social Council resolution. There is a need to clarify the institutional responsibilities of agencies within the United Nations system. The growing number of internally displaced persons represents a special challenge to the international community as regards assistance, reintegration and relationships with local authorities. Norway supports the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons.

One of the systemic issues identified by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee for further inter-agency discussion is the question of coordination in complex emergencies. Norway strongly supported the creation of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to ensure a coordinated international response to humanitarian emergencies. We are pleased to note that the Department has worked to improve its tools for coordination, among them the consolidated appeals process. We consider the consolidated appeals a good instrument for ensuring a coordinated and comprehensive response to emergencies. However, the Department often submits numerous appeals in addition to the consolidated ones. We have witnessed this in relation to the ongoing crisis in eastern Zaire. It is not always easy to understand the status of such appeals and how they are coordinated within the United Nations system. This is why we would like to emphasize that it is essential for donor Governments to be informed about the overall priorities of the United Nations system in an emergency situation. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs bears a great deal of responsibility in this respect.

An inter-agency sub-working group is now reviewing different possible options for field coordination. Norway considers this an issue of great importance, and we expect a further discussion of this at the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council. It is important that the report of the Secretary-General to that Council contain clear proposals and recommendations, based on the conclusions of the ongoing review process. All relevant experience from field coordination must be taken into account in working out and presenting the possible options.

It has been stated many times that prevention is better than cure, but this recognition is nevertheless difficult to act on. We have yet again seen a tragic event that the international community was unable to prevent, this time in the Great Lakes region. My Government is allocating resources to international efforts of negotiations and confidence-building measures to try to reduce the risk of open conflicts breaking out. Norway has established an emergency preparedness system, NOREPS, which enables us to call on staff and material resources at very short notice. We have also proposed to establish a fund to be at the disposal of the Secretary-General for rapid and preventive action. Still, much remains to be done in the field of prevention and contingency planning.

The United Nations and the international community have a very clear responsibility, based on humanitarian principles, to deal with humanitarian emergencies. However, we should at the same time emphasize that the countries whose populations are in need of assistance also have a responsibility to ensure access for humanitarian supplies, to facilitate the work of humanitarian organizations and to ensure the safety of relief personnel.

The ongoing discussion throughout the United Nations system on humanitarian relief is an opportunity for agencies to clarify the relationship between humanitarian relief and long-term development or other forms of assistance. It is important that this discussion is reflected in the report of the Secretary-General to the Economic and Social Council. While the discussion in the Council will not be the end of this process, it should be a step on the way to improving the assistance from the international community to those whose lives and futures depend on it.

Mr. Moubarak (Lebanon): It gives me great pleasure to speak on agenda item 21, entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance". My personal knowledge of Mr. Akashi and his long-established experience and great dedication, as well as the experiences drawn from activities pursued by the United Nations system in the operational field in my country, convince me that the subject of this agenda item is of the utmost importance

and covers one of the main roles entrusted to the United Nations under the Charter.

My delegation carefully considered the documentation on this item, especially the report of the Secretary-General on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations. However, due to the lack of time, I shall confine my remarks to one important aspect of the report: the relationship between relief operations and reconstruction and rehabilitation activities.

The report concludes that there is likely to be an increasing need for humanitarian assistance throughout the world. It recognizes the fact that the stagnation and dramatic decrease of official development assistance funds mitigate the general assessment that assistance targeted at sustainable development may help prevent and address complex crises.

The report further recognizes the need for the international community to assist in rebuilding war-torn communities as much as it needs to address the root causes of disasters and crises. The report, however, draws attention to the fact that funding for essential rehabilitation and reconstruction activities is sometimes scarce because public interest has waned and that, for many donors, rehabilitation requirements fall between the mandates of relief and development.

My delegation noted that, as a follow up to Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56, the Executive Boards and Committees of the United Nations operational organizations debated in particular the links between relief operations and rehabilitation and development activities. Bearing in mind the experience of Lebanon, we support the conclusions of these Committees on the need to form a strategic framework for international and national action that provides for a holistic approach to the recovery needs of countries facing crisis. We also support the efforts of, among others, the Administrative Committee on Coordination and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to establish closer working relations between the Bretton Woods institutions and other humanitarian and development agencies within the United Nations system.

We also endorse the point that humanitarian assistance must be part of an integrated response; it is no substitute for other international political, military or development activities that address conflict and its root causes. Incidentally, that view coincides with the conclusions drawn by Graça Machel, the expert appointed by the Secretary-General to report on the impact of armed conflict on children.

We have always maintained that the international community should accord special attention to the case of post-conflict peace-building countries. In that respect, we share the opinion expressed by the Secretary-General in his Supplement to "An Agenda for Peace" that post-conflict peace-building is a necessary condition for the consolidation of peace and security. There has always been confusion as to whether post-conflict peace-building activities should be considered as an extension of humanitarian assistance during emergencies or whether they should be labelled as normal development programmes. We believe that post-conflict peace-building activities are somewhere in the middle, but that they should be treated in an exceptional manner. They should be accorded the urgency necessary to enable them to complement humanitarian assistance given during emergencies. Without these activities, peace would remain very fragile.

It is in this understanding that we have always called for concerted efforts on the part of the international community to aid Lebanon's programmes for reconstruction and rehabilitation. Indeed, we recognize the fact that a number of resolutions have occasionally been adopted by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council to this end. The most recent of these was Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/32, adopted on 25 July 1996. We are gratified and will seek a similar resolution at this session of the General Assembly.

Everyone can easily recognize the unique but urgent situation facing a post-conflict peace-building country. I need not expound on the huge devastation inflicted on my country and my people by the 17 long years of war. Almost every aspect of our economy was severely damaged and we have been far behind the developments in the international economy. We must not only rebuild the country, but adapt to new imperatives recognized as necessary for development, especially the new concept of sustainable development and the new prerequisites created by the plans of action adopted by the international conferences on the child, population, social development, women and human settlements.

At present, however, we are encouraged by recent developments as a result of which a conference for the friends of Lebanon will be held in Washington next month at the invitation of the United States Government. We are confident that this endeavour will prove

exemplary and hope that it might be followed in the future in cases of post-conflict peace-building.

In Lebanon, some 20 United Nations organizations are entrusted with mandates ranging from peacekeeping and humanitarian and refugee assistance to reconstruction and development. Each one of these organizations is working, individually and together, in partnership with the Government and civil society to support national efforts to rebuild our country's future. It is true that we have always been aware of the importance of the role of United Nations functional organizations at the country level. However, at this time in our history, we are even more appreciative of this role, as it demonstrates the strong support of the international community for the historic efforts undertaken by the Government to reconstruct and rehabilitate the severely shattered country.

Our appreciation of the role of the United Nations organizations is expressed in different ways. One is the fact that we are implementing an ambitious plan to reconstruct a United Nations complex in central Beirut — the first building to be erected in the devastated centre of the capital. It will be a landmark, but it will exhibit all the requirements envisaged by different General Assembly resolutions to introduce better coordinated and cost-effective functional activities. We are sure, however, that the best expression of appreciation to these organizations will be the total realization of our common goal. That is our commitment.

Mr. Yuan Shaofu (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): This item has been under discussion at the General Assembly for five years, since the adoption of resolution 46/182. The fifth birthday of the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs is also drawing near. The Chinese delegation has noted with appreciation the unremitting efforts made by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, headed by Mr. Yasushi Akashi, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, and his predecessors, as well as their achievements in the field of emergency humanitarian assistance in actively implementing resolution 46/182 and other relevant resolutions.

It is well known that, in the past few years, the natural disasters and armed conflicts that frequently occur on Earth have resulted in the loss of countless human lives and in the massive movement of refugees. Repeated appeals have been made to the international community for emergency assistance. Humanitarian and disaster relief assistance is always in the precarious position in which demand exceeds supply. Available funds are very limited. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs is currently facing extremely serious challenges.

The Chinese delegation is of the view that, in this situation, the Department of Human Affairs should continue to coordinate effectively the efforts of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance agencies, promote close collaboration and cooperation among various agencies and bring into full play the United Nations system's overall comparative advantages in providing emergency disaster relief assistance to disaster-stricken countries. It should also continue to strengthen further the management of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund and mobilize the developed countries to make more contributions, expanding the available resources so as further to improve the ability to respond promptly to requests for disaster relief assistance. It should continue to conduct studies of the Humanitarian Early Warning System and develop a strong, effective and regular channel of communication. At the same time, it should continue to work hard in the last phase of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction to ensure the realization of these objectives.

The United Nations had declared 1996 the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty. The overwhelming majority of the victims of natural and man-made disasters live in the developing or least developed countries. It is therefore essential to mobilize the entire international community to provide disaster-stricken areas with timely humanitarian and disaster relief assistance, helping disaster-affected people in their rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts. Meanwhile, we also advocate the combination of emergency disaster relief assistance with development assistance so as to help the Governments of disaster-stricken countries to accelerate economic development, raise their scientific and technical level and strengthen their ability to prevent and fight disasters. In this way, poverty can be gradually eliminated and sustainable development realized. We hope that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and other relevant bodies will play a larger role in this aspect in the days to come.

The Chinese delegation is deeply concerned about emergency humanitarian assistance. It attaches great importance to and supports the central role played by the United Nations in coordinating various assistance activities. China is a developing country that is also disaster-prone. This year, we suffered extraordinarily serious floods seldom equalled in history. Despite such natural disasters, we responded to the best of our abilities

to the United Nations inter-agency appeals and relevant General Assembly resolutions by providing, through bilateral channels, disaster relief and special economic assistance to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Lebanon, Sierra Leone, Malawi, Zambia, Angola, Rwanda and others. The Chinese delegation fully endorses and supports the United Nations efforts to provide special economic assistance to Mozambique, Somalia, Sudan, Burundi, Rwanda, Afghanistan and other countries, as well as to the Palestinian people.

The Chinese delegation expresses serious concern over the current status of millions of refugees, internally displaced persons and returnees in the Great Lakes region of Africa. We believe that it is quite necessary to provide them with emergency humanitarian assistance and hope that the international community will respond positively as soon as possible.

Mr. Dos Santos (Mozambique): Allow me to begin by commending Mr. Razali for the exemplary manner in which he has been presiding over the deliberations of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session.

It is a great honour and privilege for me to participate, on behalf of my delegation, in the consideration of the reports of the Secretary-General on the strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance to individual countries or regions. My delegation would like to place on record its deep appreciation for the Secretary-General's reports, in particular for the manner in which they illustrate the various activities carried out by the Organization in its quest to meet the demands of humanitarian assistance in various parts of the world, particularly in Africa and in my own country.

In our endeavours to face the challenges of humanitarian assistance in emergency situations, the role of the United Nations is of utmost importance in providing a proper framework for effective coordination when the international community is called upon to address difficult problems emerging from natural disasters or other phenomena of a complex nature. As I speak before this Assembly today, millions of people are in despair and distress in the Great Lakes region. My delegation wishes to pay tribute to those Member States that have pledged to contribute to the establishment, for humanitarian purposes, of a temporary multinational force to facilitate, first, the immediate return of humanitarian organizations and the effective delivery by civilian relief organizations of humanitarian aid to alleviate the immediate suffering of displaced persons, refugees and civilians at risk in eastern Zaire; and, secondly, the voluntary, orderly repatriation of refugees by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as well as the voluntary return of displaced persons. My Government is working with other countries of the region with a view to lending support to the United Nations efforts in the Great Lakes.

In my own country, we are still receiving humanitarian aid, although the quantity has been significantly reduced. The end of the war created conditions that are allowing a shift from emergency aid to rehabilitation, reconstruction, reintegration and development, particularly in key sectors of the five-year Government programme. The creation of basic social services — schools, health centres and the provision of clean water — is an important activity which the Government has carried out with the support of the international community in order to establish minimum conditions for the successful completion of the repatriation and resettlement of those Mozambicans who sought refuge in neighbouring countries during the armed conflict. The operation in Mozambique has been regarded as one of the largest and most successful repatriation programs ever undertaken by UNHCR. This is one vivid example of the effectiveness of United Nations and international community assistance.

With the end of the repatriation process and the resettlement of the returning population, there has been significant progress in agricultural production and other productive activities. As pointed out in the Secretary-General's report on assistance to Mozambique, the political and economic transition in Mozambique has shown signs of returning the country to stability and normality.

In spite of an economic and political achievements, the external debt has remained an impediment to the improvement of the living standards of our people. As a matter of fact, Mozambique's external debt has increased by about 6 per cent over the past two years. In 1994, debt servicing alone absorbed about 93 per cent of the country's total export earnings and represented about 28.6 per cent of the gross domestic product.

My delegation concurs with the Secretary-General's observation in his report on emergency assistance to Mozambique that:

> "Clearly, to achieve a sustainable debt position and regain external viability, Mozambique will require

exceptional debt relief and forgiveness." *(A/51/560, para. 18)*

It is our hope that our development partners and the international financial institutions will speed up their efforts to alleviate our debt burden.

Although demining is one of my Government's top priorities, anti-personnel landmines continue to kill people and seriously to impede the development of the country. I would like to reiterate what my Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation said here during this Assembly's general debate:

> "For us, demining is not an end *per se*. Rather, it is a process which we regard as an integral part of the overall national development process. Where possible, it has been our policy to stimulate the launching of agricultural production and related activities once demining is completed. However, given the magnitude of the landmine issue in Mozambique, ... additional resources are needed effectively to address this problem in the years ahead, in particular within the framework of strengthening the national capacity for demining." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Plenary Meetings, 22nd meeting, p. 9)*

Developing countries like Mozambique, without the means and capacities to deal immediately with this menace, are counting on the international community to lend its solidarity and support by providing new technologies for safer and faster ways to rid the world of landmines once and for all. Moreover, my country fully supports the call for an international agreement to ban the production, stockpiling and use of anti-personnel landmines.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my country's gratitude to all those countries, international institutions and United Nations specialized agencies that have contributed and continue to contribute to the demining programme in Mozambique, as well as to the overall assistance to Mozambique.

In conclusion, I wish to stress that the successful impact of the humanitarian and disaster relief assistance to Mozambique has been the result of commendable coordination and cooperation of all actors — the United Nations, development partners and the Mozambican Government. We, therefore, value very highly, the goal of further strengthening such coordination.

Miss Durrant (Jamaica): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 13 member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) which are Members of the United Nations: Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and my own country, Jamaica, on agenda item 21, entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance."

The CARICOM countries wish to thank the Secretary-General for his report on this item, contained in document A/51/172. The report examines the context of humanitarian assistance and alludes to the fact that such assistance in the coming decade is likely to be provided in an increasingly complex environment. The report suggests that, in order to address effectively the needs of affected people and the root causes of disasters and crises, a better understanding is needed of the context in which humanitarian assistance will be provided in the future.

The report also makes the point that poverty increases vulnerability to both natural disasters and man-made emergencies. Poverty, therefore, is a complex, multidimensional problem, which leaves populations not only vulnerable to the immediate effects of disaster and conflict, but also underequipped to rebuild their livelihoods. It may also undermine the very foundation of society and exacerbate the risk of crisis.

The report also takes into account the work being done as a follow-up to the Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56, which reviews the United Nations capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies. We note the response of several United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, which have undertaken substantive discussions as a first step in the follow-up process and the expressed commitment of these bodies to addressing the issues raised in the resolution. We commend the Inter-Agency Standing Committee for establishing a framework in order to ensure a coherent response and we encourage this Committee to continue to serve as a key tool for inter-agency coordination. We continue to note the importance of the three areas of focus mentioned in the report: the links between relief operations and rehabilitation and development, the provision of assistance and protection to internally displaced persons, and coordination in complex emergencies.

We recognize that progress has been made in strengthening coordination and cooperation among the organizations of the United Nations system and other governmental and non-governmental partners in the area of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance. Admittedly, with the onslaught of sudden crises and the proliferation of natural and man-made disasters, new challenges and competing needs have repeatedly highlighted the importance of establishing a well-organized and adequately financed mechanism for coordination, both within the multifaceted humanitarian arena and with other elements of the international system involved in crisis management and pre-emptive action.

CARICOM Governments support the work of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in the advancement of humanitarian concerns. We are pleased that the report states that a financial strategy for addressing the extrabudgetary requirements of the Department has been established. We would urge donor support in order to ensure that the Department has a sound financial base and predictable resources to carry out its work in the long term.

One area of immediate challenge is the situation in the Great Lakes region of Africa. We hope that the international community will continue to assist and will develop lasting mechanisms for dealing with situations such as these.

CARICOM acknowledges the importance of ongoing work in database and information compilation in a variety of critical areas, including the Humanitarian Early Warning System, which allows for the identification of potential crises that may have humanitarian implications. As the report suggests, the need for strengthening this system is urgent. In this regard, we also underscore the need to maintain regular channels of communication with field offices and regional information systems.

New technologies, particularly in data-gathering and communications, have made possible many advances in the predictability of potentially destructive natural phenomena. We know from first-hand experience the vital role that timely and accurate information can play at all stages of an emergency and we anticipate the development of close collaboration between the United Nations and our Governments in this regard in areas relevant to our circumstances.

Over the last 25 years, the damage caused by natural phenomena to the peoples and productive infrastructures of developing countries has also increased. Natural disasters, like complex emergencies, also absorb increasing amounts of global resources and retard development agendas. Besides human and economic losses, they have, in some instances, destabilized the social and political fabric of societies.

In the Caribbean, natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods, storms, landslides, volcanic activity and drought have proven to be as almost as destructive as war and civil strife. These natural disasters bring in their wake fatalities, homelessness and billions of dollars in economic losses. We therefore recognize the critical component of the work of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the secretariat for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction in coordinating the reduction, mitigation of and response to natural disasters and environmental emergencies. CARICOM member States wish to reaffirm the importance of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action, which was adopted at the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction in 1994. This strategy took into consideration the Declaration of Barbados and its Programme of Action and accorded special consideration to the particular situation of small island developing States. We are fully supportive of the outcomes of the Yokohama Strategy, as we are of the goals and activities of the International Decade for National Disaster Reduction. The issues these complementary activities have sought to highlight are of direct relevance to the situations of the Caribbean countries.

The extreme vulnerability of the Caribbean to natural disasters is demonstrated by the multiple occurrences of hurricanes, which leave their annual trail of misery throughout the region. Admittedly, this year the Caribbean has been spared some of the devastation of last year's hurricane season. We have, however, experienced the onslaught of some hurricanes in several countries.

The threat of natural disaster has led our region to give priority to the strengthening of national and regional institutions and mechanisms aimed at strengthening the capabilities of our disaster-prone countries in preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery. Chapter II of the Barbados Programme of Action provides a blueprint in which the international community gives special recognition to the vulnerability of small island developing States and to the effects of natural and environmental disasters. Strong commitment and support at the international level and by United Nations agencies operating in the field are indispensable to the successful implementation of the important actions recommended in

that Programme of Action to address the special needs of our countries.

We wish to commend the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in facilitating, mobilizing and coordinating international relief to assist affected countries to cope with the aftermath of disasters, and we continue to underscore the value of these efforts. We note that the Department, in conjunction with United Nations Development Programme, has conducted a disaster management training programme, and, with the United Nations Environment Programme, has responded to a variety of emergencies by acting as a broker between affected and donating countries, and as a clearing house and switchboard for disaster and notification alert.

The CARICOM member States wish to thank those United Nations agencies, regional agencies, bilateral donors and non-governmental organizations which have supported our efforts to develop a comprehensive disaster management infrastructure to serve the countries of the subregion. The assistance of the World Health Organization (WHO), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the Organization of American States, and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements have been of considerable significance. The WHO and PAHO, in particular, have collaborated with regional Governments in strengthening our institutional capacity for disaster management and response, have provided advisory health services in the humanitarian field, and have contributed to the capacity-building needs of the region through seminars, workshops and public awareness efforts, and through their supply management project, designated to sort and classify the arrival of large quantities of relief supplies in post-disaster situations.

The conclusions cited in the Secretary-General's report are indeed valid. Admittedly, the humanitarian enterprise is a costly one. However, the humanitarian and disaster relief imperative cannot be denied. We concur with the report that the following areas need to be addressed: prevention, preparedness and contingency planning; coordination and refining understanding of the system; availability of the resources necessary to enable the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to carry out its mandated activities; and accountability.

We also concur with the conclusion that the international community's capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters will depend on how each part of the system works and how each part, within and outside the United Nations system, works with the other elements.

In conclusion, CARICOM member States wish to reiterate the need for international humanitarian policies to emphasize and provide adequately for the continuation of relief for rehabilitation and development, if long-term solutions are to be found. We are also persuaded from our direct experience that one of the priority objectives of these policies should be the decentralization of response strategies through the strengthening of institutional disaster management capabilities at the local, national and subregional levels. We also believe that the traditional knowledge and experiences of populations and Governments in disaster-prone countries are vital resources which must be more effectively developed and utilized.

Mr. Gorelik (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): Our delegation commented in detail on the issues of strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations during the discussions at the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council last summer. We fully share and support the provisions of Council resolution 1996/33 on this subject.

We would like to reiterate some of our views on the main issues covered in the report of the Secretary-General in the context of the overall situation regarding humanitarian emergencies. In recent months, we have been witnessing a number of alarming developments, and unfortunately, the dramatic tone of the report by the Secretary-General is justified. We can say without exaggeration that we are greatly worried by the facts cited, of persisting humanitarian need, an emerging trend of donor fatigue, and unequal interest demonstrated towards operations in particular countries and regions.

Against that background, we duly appreciate the efforts of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to organize and coordinate an international response to humanitarian crises. The Humanitarian Early Warning System (pre-crisis) and the consolidated inter-agency appeals process (during crisis) have a unique role to play in mobilizing collective inter-agency efforts in such situations. At the same time there is a need for all organizations to demonstrate a high level of drive and flexibility.

Events in Afghanistan have clearly demonstrated how a protracted and smouldering humanitarian crisis that has not been given the necessary attention can flare up to become headline news and the hottest item on the international community's agenda. The current situation

in eastern Zaire and throughout the Great Lakes region also confirms the potential explosiveness of incomplete conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation. Russia is among those countries that in recent weeks have been actively exploring ways to save the lives of thousands upon thousands of people by stabilizing the situation in the region and providing adequate humanitarian support to the population in need. Russia is already taking practical steps to provide emergency relief, including airlifts of food supplies, vehicles and other services.

Incidentally, I should like to mention that during the past year and a half the Russian Federation, through the Ministry for Emergencies alone, has provided assistance to 18 countries totalling some $20 million, while the total volume of humanitarian relief deliveries came to more than 15,000 tons. Geographically, this emergency aid was directed both to Russia's closest neighbours — Azerbaijan, Georgia, Tajikistan — and to other countries in Asia — Afghanistan, China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iraq, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Lebanon — and Africa — Congo, Ethiopia, Mali, Rwanda, Uganda and Zaire.

However, in the unstable circumstances of crises, sometimes halfway between war and peace, it remains important to maintain the continuum between emergency relief activities and efforts for rehabilitation and reconstruction. We need to take measures to strengthen the funding arrangements for such activities, including a means for the rational linkage of inter-agency appeals with donor round tables and meetings of consultative groups. In particular, we look forward to the results of the consideration of new proposals to achieve this linkage in the executive boards of the various funds and programmes as part of the preparation of the analytical report to be submitted to the Economic and Social Council in 1997.

Special attention should be paid to the issues of post-conflict peace-building that are expected to bridge the gap between aid and development. Here, a widely recognized challenge is to enhance complementarity and the coordination among all elements involved, including subdivisions of the Secretariat, humanitarian agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions.

We consider it important, particularly in the context of that so-called continuum, to maintain post-Chernobyl-related issues within the humanitarian activities of the United Nations system. The assessments and recommendations agreed on by the Quadripartite Committee at its meeting last April in connection with the tenth anniversary of that disaster should lend impetus to this area of United Nations activities. We hope that the forthcoming regular meeting of the Committee in early December will also be fruitful.

In recent years the coordination of humanitarian assistance has been substantially strengthened at the Headquarters level. A great deal has been done to improve coordination in the field. For the humanitarian sector of the United Nations to achieve due predictability in joint actions, it is important to support the expanding process of concluding memoranda of understanding between the key players of the United Nations family engaged in humanitarian operations.

With regard to the potential of the United Nations of the provision of humanitarian assistance, efforts should also be made to get rid of bottlenecks. In particular, we are of the view that in the areas of coordination, professional training, monitoring and assessment quicker and more effective results can be obtained, since for the most part it is only organizations of the United Nations system that are involved.

We are generally satisfied with the work initiated within the sub-groups established under the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, and we expect valuable recommendations in six key areas from that Committee's forthcoming meeting next February.

In our view, at this juncture various parties are exploring approaches to a more effective and integrated concept of emergency humanitarian response. It is not a question of speculative philosophizing but rather of reflecting on the practical efforts being made in such areas as the former Yugoslavia, the Sudan and the Great Lakes region. A new strategy is emerging from our day-to-day experience. We are confident that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the other principal actors will contribute substantially to its fine-tuning.

In this connection, we should like to emphasize the importance of giving the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, as the key coordinator of the United Nations humanitarian response, the opportunity to continue its work by fully utilizing its own potential in close cooperation with its partners within and outside the United Nations system.

Our delegation supports the proposal to adopt at this session of the General Assembly a substantive draft

resolution that would enable us to focus properly on priorities in the light of the overall review of the United Nations humanitarian assistance system due next year.

Mr. Owada (Japan): In 1996, the world continued to face enormous challenges as humanitarian emergencies struck Burundi, Chechnya, Iraq and many other parts of the world. Of particular concern to us today are the developments in eastern Zaire. As our experience in these calamities clearly demonstrates, it is becoming increasingly important from the humanitarian point of view, as well as for the peace and security of the region and of the world, that the international community respond to these humanitarian emergencies in a timely and effective manner. For this purpose, it is imperative that the humanitarian activities carried out under the auspices of various humanitarian organizations and agencies, together with a number of non-governmental organizations active in this field, be effectively coordinated in such a way that there should be no lacunae in the activities nor a waste of precious resources owing to overlapping. Hence, the problem of coordination becomes extremely important. The agenda item we are now considering, on "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations", is for this reason a most timely and important one.

It is encouraging that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the executive boards and committees of the humanitarian organizations of the United Nations system are engaging in discussions on how to follow up Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56, whose purpose is to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations system to respond to these emergencies in an effective way through better coordination. My delegation is satisfied with the general direction of these discussions and looks forward to receiving the final report and discussing it thoroughly at the next substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in 1997. Today, I should like to offer some salient points in my delegation's thinking on this important issue.

First, the United Nations system as a whole must strengthen its capacity to respond to emergencies by promoting better coordination among its various humanitarian organizations and agencies and by making fuller use of their expertise and experience at both the headquarters and field levels. The basic principle to be observed here is that coordination will be enhanced only if each organization and agency is aware of its own specialized field of activities and tries to work together with the others as an organic whole on the basis of mutual complementarity. In this context, the recent efforts of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other agencies to conclude memoranda of understanding aimed at putting this principle of complementarity into practice should be commended as a step in the right direction.

Secondly, with regard to coordination at the headquarters level, the role of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs at United Nations Headquarters has to be the key as the conceptual centre for such coordination. I wish to pay tribute in this connection to the strenuous efforts the Department has been making under the initiative and leadership of the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Yasushi Akashi, in this direction. In particular, the Department has made commendable efforts to define its role in taking the initiative for organizing and facilitating a timely response to a given emergency situation by different humanitarian agencies. Thus, the current efforts addressed to the enhancement of the functioning of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), which should play an important role in the exchange of information and policy coordination among the humanitarian organizations, and the improvement of the consolidated inter-agency appeals process, as well as the efforts to improve the capacity for disaster prevention and mitigation in the United Nation system, are to be commended. At the same time, Japan believes that it is essential for the Department to remain faithful to its principal function as the conceptual centre of coordination without getting into the operational field of humanitarian activities which, in principle, should be left in the hands of various operational humanitarian agencies.

Thirdly, as to coordination at the field level, my delegation believes that coordination can be most effective when it is conducted by one lead agency designated from among the various implementing agencies involved, on a case-by-case basis, according to the criteria of expertise in particular concrete situations gained through experience in conducting their activities and the permanent presence of those activities in the field. It may be true that instances will arise in which the Department of Humanitarian Affairs has to send a mission to the field to assess humanitarian needs in the absence of implementing agencies in the field. But even then, the Department should confine its work to assessing such humanitarian needs so that humanitarian activities may be put in place by the most appropriate agencies as soon as possible.

Fourthly, there is clearly a need to think through in a more systematic way the problem of how to effect a smooth transition from emergency relief to rehabilitation and development as a continuous process. In order to create a more coherent system to cope with this problem, my delegation believes that it is important to involve development assistance agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank at an early stage of our work, in order to take full advantage of their expertise and resources, while at the same time humanitarian assistance agencies implement programmes that will help stimulate rehabilitation and development. To that end, a mechanism should be established to ensure close cooperation between humanitarian organizations and development agencies, so that their operations may proceed in a coordinated and complementary manner. In this connection, Japan supports the recent decision by UNDP to allocate a part of its core funds to assistance in special economic situations, provided that this money is used to meet the financial needs that arise in the transitional stage from emergency relief to rehabilitation and development. The concrete modalities for using these funds, however, would seem to require further careful study.

Fifthly, the issue of internally displaced persons is a delicate problem on which there has been much discussion without a concrete conclusion in IASC and other forums, in the absence of an organization that is primarily responsible for this important issue. My delegation believes that the basic principle from which we start must be that each of the humanitarian assistance agencies should be responsible for these internally displaced persons within the scope of its own mandate and that the agencies together should try to cope with a concrete situation for the protection of internally displaced persons through a coordinated framework of cooperation based on their respective speciality, experience and capabilities. How to create such a framework on the basis of this principle is a task that would need our further study. We look forward to receiving recommendations from IASC on how best to divide responsibility for addressing this issue among the agencies and how to coordinate their activities. On the other hand, it is the considered view of my delegation that we should be cautious about assigning the primary responsibility in this area to UNHCR, considering the already high financial and other burdens placed upon it.

In our efforts to improve coordination along the lines I have just described, the central coordinating role of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs is going to be extremely important. In this context, Japan views the present financial situation that the Department faces with grave concern, and is convinced that a radical long-term solution has to be sought on an urgent basis if we are serious about the role that it is expected to play. While my delegation fully supports the current efforts of the Department to obtain a larger allocation from the regular budget, I believe that a much more fundamental solution needs to be sought by integrating, in principle, the Department's whole expenditure into the regular budget, inasmuch as it is an integral and core part of the United Nations Secretariat. For this reason, even in the midst of the current efforts to reduce the overall budget of the United Nations, a full-fledged effort should be made to finance the Department's core activities through assessed contributions. If it is inevitable that it will in the meantime continue to have to depend heavily on voluntary contributions from donor countries, my delegation urges that it make further progress in prioritizing its activities, and undertake further efforts at rationalization and enhanced efficiency in the Department.

I wish briefly to touch upon the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF). We note with satisfaction that CERF has been an effective means of bridging the financial gap and enabling United Nations agencies to respond to emergencies in a timely manner. However, the suggestion made in the report of the Secretary-General concerning the use of the Fund for protracted emergencies as well should, in the view of my delegation, be viewed with great caution, considering the original and main purpose of the Fund, which is to ensure a timely response in the initial phase of an emergency. As for another suggestion in the report that CERF should be expanded, my delegation sees no urgent need to do so at this stage, as we understand that the balance has now rebounded to a satisfactory level.

As I mentioned at the outset, one of the most important factors in ensuring the peace and security of the world today is the ability of the international community to respond effectively to humanitarian emergencies. I wish to reiterate that Japan will continue to participate actively in the discussion on how to realize such an effective response.

Beginning next year, thanks to the support it has received from so many Member countries, Japan will participate in the discussions of the Security Council in the area of the maintenance of peace and security.

Japan is determined to contribute, through active participation in these discussions, to achieving our objectives and ensuring peace and stability in various

parts of the world. In so doing, Japan deems it important to keep in mind in particular that in our present-day world, peace and stability cannot be achieved and maintained solely on the basis of political and military factors, but that stable and durable peace can be realized only through efforts that take into account a wider perspective which comprises humanitarian concerns and social and economic reconstruction and development as well.

Mr. Erwa (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The Government of the Sudan, based on its commitment to all its citizens, took the initiative to invite the United Nations to participate with the Government of the Sudan in coordinating and managing Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) to deliver assistance and relief to those affected by the war. This invitation was based on Sudan's conviction that the United Nations is a neutral international instrument which contributes to peace in the world. Since the establishment of Operation Lifeline Sudan, my Government has made every effort to cooperate with international organizations and donors to deliver assistance to its citizens. It has requested the United Nations to make every effort to guarantee that the rebel factions accepted the operation. The Government of the Sudan delegated to the United Nations the delivery of relief assistance and relief to the citizens based on our confidence in the effectiveness, transparency and neutrality of the Organization.

Those are the principles upon which Operation Lifeline Sudan was based. In the short time since it was launched, no more than seven years ago, the Operation has set a precedent with regard to humanitarian policies in the field of international cooperation. We have responded voluntarily to the needs of those affected and have created safe corridors without the need for a military force or for encroaching on national sovereignty. This, we believe, is a modern example of how to deal with such situations in any part of the world. The Government of the Sudan hopes that Operation Lifeline will prove to be one of the major means of confidence-building and peace settlement, for it is one of the most important means of providing humanitarian assistance. We would like to express our appreciation to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with regard to the Culture of Peace Programme. Here we wish to refer in particular to the May 1996 symposium held in Noordwijk, the Netherlands, on the humanitarian dimension, of dispute settlement.

The Government of the Sudan has taken a comprehensive view of the recommendations that came out of the seminar and we have passed them on to the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator. These recommendations gave us a basis on which to implement all the steps necessary to establish permanent peace.

Operations like OLS deserve consideration in other areas of the world with similar conflicts. We would like to mention the positive results of this relief operation, in cooperation with the Government, in alleviating the suffering of those affected by conflict. However, we believe that we should very carefully review into the economic viability of the Operation with a view to increasing its effectiveness and cost efficiency. We believe that we have suffered in this regard because we focused on air transport, and ignored land, rail and river transport which are much more cost-effective. The use of such routes would save vast resources which could be diverted to the benefit of those in need.

The Sudan is eager and determined to deliver relief assistance to all its affected citizens, even those in the rebel areas. However, the distribution of relief should be the result of surveys and not be based on any other consideration. The Government of the Sudan reaffirms its commitment to the results of such surveys without any distinction between populations, living under the authority of the Government and those in the rebel areas. Resolution 50/58 J of 22 December 1995 stresses the need for ongoing review of OLS to assess its effectiveness and transparency, and the need for the involvement of the Government of the Sudan in its operation. The Government of the Sudan has made every effort to implement that resolution.

We welcome a United Nations role in coordinating the relief operation. But that role should be within the framework of full participation by the Government of the Sudan and cooperation with it, for my Government cannot just abandon its responsibilities and its legitimate sovereign rights. Therefore, the Government of the Sudan reaffirms its request for complete respect for the provisions of General Assembly resolution 50/58 J of 22 December 1995, which stresses the need for the Government of the Sudan to participate in the operation of OLS.

Although there is a general conviction that Operation Lifeline Sudan should continue, the Government of the Sudan notes that financing for the Operation has decreased. The appeal for financing for the Operation through August 1996 produced the following sums: $28,721,739 for the United Nations operation and

$37,415,964 for operation elements outside the United Nations system, which gave a total of $66,136,701. This is 26.6 per cent of the amount called for in the joint appeal, which shows the weakness of the financing of Operation Lifeline Sudan.

Protecting relief convoys and the safety of humanitarian aid workers are among the most important principles of OLS and of humanitarian actions in general. Our Government condemns and expresses its deep regret for the trespasses and violations committed by certain rebel factions on 25 September 1996, during which they kidnapped and tortured two humanitarian workers. Our Government calls on all parties to commit themselves very seriously to the principles governing OLS if they do not wish to undermine its main objectives. We feel that any further incidents of this sort will affect the delivery of humanitarian assistance to those in need.

The Government of Sudan believes that all parties are participants in and not opponents to OLS. Based on this premise, our Government welcomes cooperation in the survey, control and distribution of relief throughout Sudan, as an expression of goodwill and in order to build confidence, deepen the peace process and serve the humanitarian objectives. In this connection, we have no objection to voluntary organizations working in the rebel areas. However, they should act in accordance with the principles of OLS and Sudanese law.

The Government of Sudan, believing in the need for humanitarian work, has no objection to the formation of joint teams of Government and rebel participants concerned with humanitarian work. We believe that this is important to carrying out the surveys, because it will lead to confidence-building and allow us to gather concrete and harmonized data. Our Government is prepared to provide everything necessary in order to facilitate this operation.

My country has undertaken several steps towards the achievement of peace and stability. We signed a Charter for peace, which led eight rebel factions to express their wish to return to the homeland and to participate in the development process. Our Government issued a general amnesty and left the door open for the other rebel factions to join the Charter. Such steps have provided an opportunity for the large-scale return of populations living in refugee camps to the country. Our country facilitated these people's voluntary return to their places of origin, or to other areas where there were opportunities to work and to participate in development once there was an acceptable level of stability and security. We made all the necessary preparations in order to enable them to achieve self-reliance in production. In this context, our Government calls on the international community to support the projects and programmes for the rehabilitation and return of the refugees.

We believe, moreover, that the peaceful climate prevalent in many areas today will allow the refugees in neighbouring countries to return to Sudan. We are making every effort to welcome and resettle them in their homes. Our Government also appeals to the international community to assist in these efforts, in accordance with the international instruments relevant to refugees.

The Government of Sudan agreed to open safe corridors for the delivery of humanitarian assistance to those affected in southern Sudan. This next stage requires talks with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in order to update the previous agreement, reached in 1994. The Government believes that there is a need to reallocate the necessary sums of money in order to establish those corridors, which would allow the delivery of relief to the affected areas in a cost-effective manner.

On the other hand, the landmines haphazardly planted in the southern areas of the country constitute a serious threat to peace, security and the safety of the population. United Nations reports refer to the fact that the rebellion movement led by John Garang de Maibior has made Sudan the third most heavily mined country in Africa. This threatens the lives of civilians, particularly women and children, and has in fact killed and maimed many innocent people.

The Government of Sudan has established a national committee to monitor landmines and to protect and educate the population with regard to the dangers of these weapons. We welcome the assistance of the international community in eliminating this problem. In this connection, the Government of Sudan wishes to express its gratitude to the major donors for their readiness to participate and to assist in this field. We hope that Operation Lifeline Sudan will be given priority assistance for its implementation.

Our Government attaches great importance to volunteer work. In 1993, there was widespread discussion with volunteer organizations in Sudan. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs was a participant in these talks, as were representatives of international volunteer organizations. Our Government makes every effort to support national volunteer organizations and the

institutions of civil society. We welcome coordination between our organizations and their counterparts at the international level.

Children are undoubtedly the most vulnerable targets, particularly in cases of armed conflict. It was therefore necessary to make serious efforts to protect them from physical and mental harm. In this connection, the Government of Sudan calls for the comprehensive implementation of the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly in armed conflicts. The Government of Sudan continues to call on the rebel movement to refrain from harming children and from using them on the battlefield. This has led to the death and displacement of tens of thousands of children and their incarceration as prisoners of war.

Our Government wishes to announce that it is committed to protecting children in all areas, now and in the future. We call on the international community to take the necessary steps for the return of children to their families and for their mental and physical rehabilitation, in accordance with the provisions of resolution 50/153 of 21 December 1995 on abandoned children. With the special Khartoum declaration on the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, we have achieved full partnership with the international community with regard to this Convention.

Our commitment is irreversible where Operation Lifeline Sudan is concerned. We shall continue to make every effort in support of such a choice. Indeed, we believe that we shall very quickly move from relief to the affected population to a stage of production and active participation in the process of development and self-sufficiency. We therefore call on all our partners in this Operation to intensify their efforts to increase confidence, transparency, respect for humanitarian principles and the highest consideration for lofty, moral and humanitarian principles.

Mr. Fowler (Canada) (*interpretation from French*): Over the past two weeks, the world's attention has been riveted on the situation in eastern Zaire. While the international community might have reacted to the crisis sooner, the manner in which action has been galvanized in recent days has been nonetheless remarkable. Countries from all parts of the world have responded impressively. For its part, Canada contributed to this effort in the political, military and humanitarian spheres with an offer of $15 million in emergency humanitarian assistance only a few hours after the appeal was launched. For the victims of this ongoing tragedy, it is not possible to do enough, but we must assure them that the efforts and resources we can bring to bear on the crisis are deployed to their maximum effect.

In short, even as we struggle to absorb the lessons of Somalia, Bosnia and Rwanda, the crisis in Zaire has illustrated once again the vital importance of strengthening the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations system. The international community's response to this latest crisis highlights some issues surrounding humanitarian coordination and could suggest directions for long-term improvements.

What the international community has learned above all from past experience is that the response to complex humanitarian emergencies must be comprehensive and integrated. The evaluation jointly made by donors of emergency assistance to Rwanda emphasized that the political, diplomatic, military, humanitarian, peacekeeping, human rights and development aspects become inextricably intertwined before, during and after the peak of a crisis. An effective integrated response must take all these elements into account. We are all conscious of the need for strong coordination between the various political, humanitarian and military aspects of the operation in eastern Zaire.

On the political side, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Ambassador Raymond Chrétien, is tirelessly travelling among the regional capitals to consult on and develop urgent plans to defuse tensions and to create a stable atmosphere for negotiations.

In the humanitarian sphere, we welcome the appointment of Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, the Assistant United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, as regional Humanitarian Coordinator, and of Mr. Martin Griffiths of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) to assist him. The Coordinator has been working closely with Ambassador Chrétien, particularly in discussions with Governments on questions relating to access to refugees and displaced persons. He is responsible for the strategic coordination of the overall humanitarian effort, for identifying agreed goals and for the coherence of humanitarian policies. United Nations humanitarian agencies, special envoys and representatives, non-governmental organizations and others involved in the relief effort are doing their utmost to assist Mr. Vieira de Mello in fulfilling his crucial task. We strongly encourage them to participate fully in the various coordination mechanisms currently being put in place.

(spoke in English)

Turning to the military element, there is a strong need for close consultation and collaboration between the multinational force and the humanitarian agencies on the scope of operations for humanitarian needs. Troop contributors to the multinational force will be meeting in Stuttgart tomorrow to discuss options and plans and to discuss the impact of the latest events on their mission. Major humanitarian agencies will also be attending the meeting. The changing situation on the ground; the number and nature of troops necessary; how, when and where they should go — all vitally important issues — will be under consideration. While, in view of the welcome return home to Rwanda of half a million refugees, our plans have to be revised, the original mandate remains valid: food and humanitarian assistance have to be provided and those refugees who wish to return must be assisted.

In considering the need for inter-agency coordination in all aspects of a complex emergency, Canada sees particular promise in the work of the Military and Civil Defence Unit established by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. Extremely close cooperation between the Unit and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) remains vital. We encourage other agencies to identify specific requirements for military and civilian defence assets. Several airlifts have been facilitated by the Unit and we encourage countries to respond to the Unit's requests for assistance on behalf of United Nations agencies. We also welcome the negotiation of specific inter-agency memorandums of understanding, defining respective responsibilities in responding to the present crisis.

In the absence of secure available resources to meet a crisis — in other words, money in the bank — coordinated fund-raising must remain another key element of any effective humanitarian response. Despite difficulties in conducting detailed assessments in the affected areas, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs has managed to issue a consolidated inter-agency flash appeal in response to the crisis. This is an additional and welcome step in strengthening the coordination of our response to the crisis. In this connection, I might add that effective coordination in the future will also require more stable and reliable ongoing funding for the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. Canada sees a clear and urgent need to increase United Nations regular budget allocations to DHA and, for those DHA activities where voluntary financing is appropriate, the donor base must be expanded.

Lessons from a not-so-distant past also tell us that early donor coordination is key. This Saturday in Geneva, Canada will host a meeting of donors to seek agreement on key priorities for reintegration of the refugees returning to Rwanda. The objectives of the meeting are fourfold: first, to get a better understanding of the situation of returning refugees so donor actions can have more impact; secondly, to mobilize the interest and support of donors and focus their attention on the resettlement issue; thirdly, to review what specific donors can do to best sketch out priorities for action; and, finally, Canada hopes donors and agencies can agree on the next steps to turn our commitments into action.

There is a clear pressing need for water, shelter, food, agricultural start-up kits and health services. There is also a need to support community-level dispute resolution and increase the number of human rights monitors in Rwanda.

To conclude, these are some of the ideas that have guided Canada in formulating its approach to the current crisis in Central Africa. Unfortunately, this is but the latest such tragedy to capture our attention, and it seems a safe bet that it will not be the last. It is thus crucial that we build on the hard lessons we have learned and take the steps required to ensure the most effective possible coordination of United Nations efforts in future humanitarian emergencies. To this end, Canada pledges its full cooperation with all of our partners in the Assembly's deliberations under this agenda item.

Mr. Choi (Republic of Korea): The diverse nature of the humanitarian crises that the world has witnessed in recent years, and the increasing frequency of appeals to the international community for humanitarian aid, have highlighted the urgent need to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations in the field of humanitarian and disaster relief activities. My delegation is pleased to take part in our discussion today on how we can meet this need. I should first like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/51/172), which provides us with an excellent basis for our deliberations. We should like to comment on certain aspects of the report that we consider particularly important.

My delegation shares the view expressed in the report that ensuring effective coordination among the various United Nations organs engaged in humanitarian

assistance operations is of overriding importance. Considering that the recent sharp increase in demand for humanitarian assistance has not been matched by a rise in funds available for that purpose, we believe that the need to increase the efficiency of United Nations organs through enhanced coordination mechanisms is more important than ever. It serves the best interests of the victims of natural and man-made disasters, as well as those of donors, to ensure that available resources are put to optimal use.

In this regard, we note with satisfaction that, since its creation in 1992, the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs has played a leading role in reinforcing coordination among the various United Nations agencies involved in humanitarian assistance. We particularly welcome the establishment of institutional arrangements such as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and consolidated appeals. We also commend the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs for institutionalizing discussions with the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations through the "framework for coordination".

We believe, however, that much remains to be done. First, efforts should be made to draw a clearer division of responsibility among the various United Nations agencies and programmes involved in humanitarian assistance. Secondly, in the light of the stagnation of overall resources for international assistance, a system should be introduced to clearly prioritize the various assistance operations. Thirdly, coordination and cooperation should also be strengthened at the field level. The role of the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in ensuring greater cost-effectiveness and timeliness in aid operations is critical to achieving this goal. We hope that the Inter-Agency Standing Committee will be able to make recommendations on these issues in its report to the Economic and Social Council at next year's session.

My delegation agrees that there is a need to forge a stronger link between relief operations, rehabilitation and development activities. The concept of a "continuum" for humanitarian aid, extending from relief to rehabilitation and development, deserves greater attention, starting with the initial phases of relief operations.

We welcome the actions taken by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to integrate rehabilitation activities into development, as described in part III of the report. Considering the important role played by the Bretton Woods institutions in financing development, we also support the efforts of the Administrative Committee on Coordination and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to establish closer working relationships with the Bretton Woods institutions and other humanitarian development agencies within the United Nations system.

My delegation also supports the Secretary-General's view that the increased integration of relief and development activities will require the donor community to advance suggestions as to how the normally highly compartmentalized fund for relief and development can be used in a more flexible manner. However, we are of the view that the linkage between relief and development necessitates a more careful definition of the concept and a clearer division of labour between humanitarian aid organs and development programmes. Furthermore, we are concerned that a hasty incorporation of the "continuum" concept into humanitarian activities could draw already inadequate funds away from the provision of assistance to victims engaged in a day-to-day struggle for survival, who need urgent and immediate help.

My delegation also wishes to underline the importance of improving the monitoring and evaluation mechanism of United Nations humanitarian assistance operations. The existing mechanism is largely agency-specific, and, as acknowledged in the Secretary-General's report, efforts undertaken to establish joint or inter-agency monitoring or evaluation have been insufficient. After providing aid in response to a United Nations consolidated appeal earlier this year, my Government has also come to understand the need for a better coordinated and integrated monitoring and evaluation system that enhances the cost-effectiveness, impact and transparency of United Nations humanitarian assistance.

In the light of the pivotal importance of early warning and preparedness in preventing and mitigating conflict-driven crises, my delegation welcomes the efforts of the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs to establish a Humanitarian Early Warning System, which will help identify potential crises that may have humanitarian implications. We encourage various international organizations and non-governmental organizations to participate in developing the United Nations Humanitarian Early Warning System as a centre of information on situations of concern. The launch of ReliefWeb will, we believe, do much to help ensure faster and more widespread dissemination of information on emergencies and disasters, thus enabling all relevant

actors to reliably track the rapidly changing need for assistance as events unfold.

It goes without saying that, in the event of a natural disaster, the primary responsibility for the provision of emergency assistance to the victims lies with the Government of the country afflicted. We believe that the Government concerned must make every effort, on a high-priority basis, to help victims, including through the reallocation of Government budget resources and stockpiled materials for rehabilitation.

My Government therefore holds the view that the United Nations organizations and organs responsible for emergency assistance should take the necessary steps to improve their access to information on the actual extent of damage in an afflicted country, and on the degree of self-help measures that the afflicted country has undertaken. We believe that such steps would be beneficial, not only to the people of the afflicted country, but also to the credibility of the United Nations humanitarian assistance system.

Furthermore, we believe that the Governments of those countries seeking emergency support should make public all available information concerning the scale of damage and the need for external assistance, and allow officials from donor nations and non-governmental organizations, as well as members of the media, greater access to the afflicted areas. Such openness is worthwhile, we believe, not only because it enhances the transparency of humanitarian assistance operations, but also because it draws the attention of the international community to the plight of the country concerned. Increased transparency, in tandem with media exposure, will help to foster a greater public awareness of the need for emergency assistance, facilitating the widest possible participation of the international community in its provision.

My delegation shares with the world community a serious concern about the massive humanitarian tragedy currently unfolding in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa. It calls for urgent, immediate humanitarian assistance to the refugees who have returned to Rwanda and to the displaced persons in eastern Zaire. We wholeheartedly welcome the Consolidated Inter-Agency Flash Appeal for the Great Lakes Region that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs launched earlier this week. We expect a positive reaction from the international community in the days to come.

Before concluding, my delegation wishes to pay high tribute to the courageous individuals who, motivated by a spirit of deep humanity, are engaged in humanitarian assistance throughout the world. The Republic of Korea, for its part, pledges to continue its commitment to the noble cause that underlies every United Nations humanitarian assistance operation.

Mr. Marrero (United States of America): The United States appreciates the opportunity to share our views on priorities for the United Nations system in the area of humanitarian assistance. I should like to express my Government's strong support for the work of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in coordinating humanitarian assistance, and for the leadership of Under-Secretary-General Akashi.

Today, the United Nations is better prepared to respond to complex humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters than it was only two years ago. There is more effective coordination within the Secretariat among the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the Department of Political Affairs, and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. A Military and Civil Defence Unit has been established within the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to facilitate timely, sufficient and cost-effective military and civil defence support to humanitarian agencies.

The Department of Humanitarian Affairs has been designated as the United Nations focal point for all humanitarian mine-clearance activities and, in that capacity, has made addressing the scourge of landmines a focus of world attention. Several operational agencies have signed memoranda of understanding to improve the coordination of humanitarian assistance. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs coordinates an improving consolidated appeal process, and the dissemination of information on donor funding for appeals is thorough, professional and easily accessible through ReliefWeb.

The effects of the current Great Lakes crisis could have been far worse had there not been inter-agency contingency planning and prepositioning of stocks in the region. The information from United Nations agencies, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, international organizations and non-governmental organizations, made available on ReliefWeb, also has been critical to keeping interested parties current on developments in that rapidly evolving crisis. The decision to include in the Consolidated Inter-Agency Flash Appeal for the Great Lakes Region funding for an non-governmental organization coordination unit and human rights monitors shows that the humanitarian community not only learns

from past experiences but also can take positive actions in response to those lessons learned.

But the United Nations still faces many challenges in responding effectively to humanitarian crises. While coordination within the Secretariat in New York has improved significantly, coordination between the Secretariat and the United Nations operational agencies at Headquarters and in the field is less than optimal. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee has not yet lived up to its potential, nor have we yet learned how to make a successful transition from humanitarian relief to sustainable recovery. The number and complexity of crises continues to strain the capacity of the relief community.

However, my Government is optimistic that, by working together, Governments, the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and the private sector can make great progress, not only in delivering humanitarian assistance, but also in mitigating crises before they occur. Prevention of humanitarian crises should be a priority of the international community. In that light, I offer the following recommendations.

First, I should like to reiterate my Government's support for the leadership role of the Emergency Relief Coordinator in ensuring a coordinated response to complex emergencies. A coordinated response requires a clear division of labour and an appropriate coordination mechanism that has the full support of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. We often talk about coordination as if it were some cure-all or abstract concept. It is not. The goal of coordination is to reach more needy people, more quickly, with more resources. For such coordination to occur, it must build on the mandates, expertise and comparative advantage of all the agencies concerned, including the Department of Humanitarian Affairs.

Secondly, the role of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee should be strengthened. It should serve both as the primary mechanism for inter-agency decisions on humanitarian issues and as an effective forum for immediate inter-agency decision-making on rapidly evolving crises. We recommend that all members of the Committee share in the preparatory process for its meetings and take ownership of that process. Each member should designate a focal point within his organization who could ensure that organization's fullest possible participation in the Committee.

Thirdly, ReliefWeb is a tool whose utility increases exponentially as the number of its users and contributors expands. We strongly encourage those involved in emergencies worldwide to post their reports on ReliefWeb so that it can achieve its potential as the global information system for the dissemination of reliable, timely information on emergencies and natural disasters.

Fourthly, we encourage members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to work closely with the Bretton Woods institutions and the regional development banks to ensure that rehabilitation, reconstruction and long-term development are addressed in a more effective manner from the earliest possible stages of relief. We encourage the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to use its TRAC 3 resources actively to facilitate such strategic planning.

Along with asking the United Nations system to improve its provision of humanitarian assistance and facilitate the transition to development, we Governments must also do our part. It is essential for all States whose populations are in need of humanitarian assistance to facilitate the work of the humanitarian community. They must also ensure the safety of humanitarian personnel. All parties must respect the sanctity of international humanitarian law and norms of behaviour. Governments must give coherent directions to governing bodies of relevant United Nations organizations in order to promote cooperation between those organizations and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs.

Finally, we must create a sound and stable financial basis for the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. It is unacceptable that the Department must rely on voluntary contributions for more than 65 per cent of its total funding requirements. We urge Member States and the Secretary-General to explore all solutions to achieve an adequate level of financing for the Department from the regular budget for the 1998-1999 biennium.

Coordination and cooperation among Governments, international organizations and the non-governmental organizations are key elements in the search for solutions. The United States enthusiastically supports efforts undertaken through Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56 to examine the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance. We look forward to the comprehensive analytical report that the Secretary-General will submit to next year's session of the Economic and Social Council in this regard.

Mrs. Osode (Liberia): At the outset, I would like to take this opportunity to commend the Department of

Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) and Under-Secretary-General Akashi for improving the coordination activities of the United Nations humanitarian and disaster relief assistance in areas of need around the globe. In particular, I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report, contained in document A/51/303 of 23 August 1996, now under consideration, which gives a thorough overview of the involvement of the United Nations and the humanitarian community in the Liberian peace process.

Until the world witnessed yet another tragic event in the capital city, Monrovia, in April and May this year, Liberians and the world had reason to believe that a resolution to the Liberian conflict was on the horizon. Liberians were returning home to their country in larger numbers and the Organization had a strategy to meet humanitarian needs, while increasing self-reliance and restoring essential services and infrastructure without perpetuating the disparities that had contributed to the conflict. The war was so senseless, vicious and devastating. The Secretary-General expresses his regrets in his report that many of the humanitarian initiatives have been derailed, some irreparably.

The civil war has destroyed the country's economic and administrative infrastructure, making humanitarian assistance essential. Inside the country, more than one million people, including thousands of internally displaced persons, need humanitarian assistance. Recent improvements in access to some areas have made it possible to reach communities cut off from assistance for a year or more. Nearly two million refugees and internally displaced persons received assistance through the subregional programmes of the World Food Programme before the war in Monrovia. Today, that number has drastically dwindled. Far less than 20 per cent of Liberia's pre-war health facilities are operating and many medical personnel have been killed or have fled. Programmes are badly needed for women, orphans and street children, child soldiers, the disabled and other vulnerable groups. Compounding what seems to be an already daunting problem is Liberia's nagging debt burden of over $1.8 billion and the severe impediments to generating funds.

My delegation agrees that the United Nations is overburdened with an increasing demand for emergency and humanitarian assistance. However, we must say without equivocation that the United Nations is the only global Organization that is equipped to offer hope and relief to the millions of suffering people in conflict and disaster situations.

With the revalidation of the Abuja Agreement on 17 August 1996, a new Chairperson of the Council of State of the Liberian National Transitional Government, whose presence graced this body on 9 October 1996, was appointed. Since her appointment and induction into office on 3 September 1996, Mrs. Ruth Perry has endeavoured to make the Council cohesive. She has continued to work closely with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Committee of Nine on Liberia. Her endeavours to promote consensus among the hostile factions, encouraging them to seek reconciliation instead of confrontation, and her caring ways have won her widespread support among Liberians and members of ECOWAS.

The Liberian people are very much aware of the difficulties that lie ahead and cannot be underestimated; we are not going to delude ourselves into thinking otherwise. However, we are optimistic that, with the commitment and political will of members of the Council of State, as well as the resolve of Liberians to move forward in bringing peace, reconciliation and unity to their country, international assistance for Liberia will become generous and even more justified.

We appreciate the continuing interest of the international community in Liberia and the various steps being undertaken to further the peace process. We note with gratitude that a ministerial meeting consisting of core donor countries and the ECOWAS Committee of Nine on Liberia, is today convening in Brussels, Belgium, at the invitation of the Belgian Government, under the auspices of the United Nations. The meeting is expected to review the progress made in the peace process and to assess the specific assistance required to keep it on track. The meeting is a follow-up to the very constructive Special Conference held on 22 October 1996 at United Nations Headquarters in support of the peace process in Liberia. We also note with further appreciation the response of those States and donors to the Secretary-General's invitation of 30 May 1996 to provide information on assistance to Liberia.

The role of countries in the region, in particular that of Nigeria, has been encouraging and decisive in the new peace process. It is pleasing to note that the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) has already made reconnaissance missions to assembly points for the disarmament of combatants, which will begin on 22 November 1996 and conclude on 31 January 1997. The ECOMOG Field Commander, Major-General Victor Malu, recently assured the

international community and donor countries that the disarmament process will begin as scheduled

> "no matter the strength of additional troops that would have arrived in the mission area".

In this connection, I would like to reiterate the appeal of the Liberian Government and the Secretary-General to all States to contribute generously to the Trust Fund for Liberia, which was established by the Secretary-General and ECOWAS, *inter alia*, to assist ECOMOG in its mandate and to avoid any further setback in the disarmament process. I take this opportunity to express my delegation's thanks to those States that have responded to the appeal. States should also assist in meeting one of the great challenges facing the country: demobilization and the reintegration of former fighters. As the Secretary-General has rightly commented, there cannot be peace until combatants are provided with credible alternatives to a life of violence.

During the nearly seven years of conflict, the provision of essential services has fallen largely to the humanitarian community. We wish to recognize its great contributions. Its agreed mission statement reflects the unified views of its signatories regarding the provision of humanitarian assistance in Liberia. For its part, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is providing basic equipment and supplies to key Government agencies to assist in the rehabilitation of their infrastructure. Its recent announcement that it would provide a $700,000 mobile traffic control tower for the James Spriggs Payne airfield in Monrovia has been welcomed with great enthusiasm by my Government.

Finally, my delegation wishes to underscore that we are at a critical stage in the Liberian peace process. Countries of the West African region are making concerted and determined efforts to ensure that the peace process is not derailed. The international community has a moral obligation to assist in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Liberia towards a brighter future, thus upholding the morals of our Organization. My delegation would like to assure this body that Liberia, with the grace of God, will endeavour to meet the challenges ahead.

Mr. Gerus (Belarus) (*interpretation from Russian*): I have the honour to make a statement on behalf of the Republic of Belarus on agenda item 21, related to strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations.

In its resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991, the General Assembly stated its deep concern about the suffering of the victims of disasters and emergency situations, the loss in human lives, the flow of refugees, the mass displacement of people and the material destruction, and set forth a number of guiding principles and measures to strengthen the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations system.

We are satisfied at the fact that work related to the reduction and mitigation of, and the response to, natural disasters and environmental emergencies has become — as noted in the report of the Secretary-General on this issue (A/51/172) — a basic component of the implementation of resolution 46/182 by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and specialized agencies of the United Nations system. The Republic of Belarus deeply appreciates the efforts made by all the programmes, funds and specialized agencies of the United Nations system towards providing increased, speedier and better quality assistance to the various countries and regions suffering from armed conflicts, natural disasters, industrial ecological catastrophes and other emergency circumstances.

Today we would like to draw the attention of the General Assembly to certain aspects of international interaction in mitigating the effects of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. Document A/51/633 contains a letter from the President of the Republic of Belarus addressed to the Secretary-General and a memorandum from the Government of my country specifying the principal Belarusian strategies for developing long-term international cooperation in the second post-Chernobyl decade.

The need to consider these issues stems from the fact that the world has never before experienced an environmental disaster of this scale. The number of victims is now in the thousands, and people continue to suffer from the consequences of this disaster. As members are aware, 70 per cent of the fallout from Chernobyl fell on Belarus, and the average radiation burden on the population is the highest in the world. The incidence of thyroid cancer has increased several hundredfold, and the birth rate has dropped by 40 per cent. The Government of Belarus has had to allocate up to one quarter of its national revenue to resolving post-Chernobyl problems and has instituted a 12 per cent Chernobyl tax.

That is why the Government of my country attaches vital importance to United Nations activities to mobilize

international assistance for Belarus and the other countries most severely affected by Chernobyl. We are grateful for the efforts that have been made by the United Nations and its specialized agencies in contributing to the noble cause of assisting the victims of Chernobyl.

We are also pleased that the General Assembly, at its fiftieth session, adopted a resolution placing the Chernobyl issue on the agenda of the Assembly's fifty-second session in 1997. We are convinced that the Assembly should continue to consider this issue at subsequent sessions.

On the whole, the Government of Belarus commends the efforts of the United Nations organizations, specialized agencies and programmes to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. At the same time, we are somewhat disappointed at the meagre response of individual intergovernmental organizations to the Secretary-General's appeal to provide assistance to projects to minimize the tragic consequences of this disaster.

We believe that such a response is an indication of a lack of coordination and complementarity in the efforts of the United Nations Secretariat and the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system in the area of issues related to Chernobyl. Over the past five years, there have been five United Nations Coordinators for International Cooperation on Chernobyl. The Chernobyl secretariat was completely reorganized four times. In our view, such instability in staffing cannot be explained only by efforts to reform the United Nations Secretariat.

We are deeply convinced that the main problem continues to be that of financing the list of priority Chernobyl-related programmes and projects reviewed by the United Nations in 1995. We are well aware of the Organization's critical financial situation and we are not counting on further resources from its budget. In this regard, I should like to recall that, in November 1995, the Quadripartite Committee for Coordination on Chernobyl entrusted the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs with the task of developing a strategy for appealing to intergovernmental financial institutions and donor countries to finance Chernobyl-related projects.

The economy of Belarus is gradually recovering from the damage caused by the Chernobyl disaster, and this work continues to be a priority in the Government's socio-economic and scientific and technological programmes. However, Belarus, like other countries in transition most severely affected by Chernobyl, is not in a position to solve the whole range of problems on its own. The need of these countries for resources to overcome the consequences of the disaster is many times greater than its economic and technological capacities.

In particular, my country is in dire need of international financial and technical assistance to support the long-term medical programmes being carried out with the participation of the World Health Organization (WHO), which will have the greatest effect on the rehabilitation and sustainable development of the affected districts.

Belarus would like to see greater results from the work of the mechanism for coordinating United Nations Chernobyl-related activities. We propose that at its scheduled December 1996 meeting, the Quadripartite Committee for Coordination on Chernobyl specify the phases and modalities for advancing medical and environmental projects and programmes in order to ensure the sustainable economic and social development of Belarus and other most severely affected countries in transition, which find themselves in a critical situation as a result of the Chernobyl disaster.

I should like to mention the following priority areas for international post-Chernobyl cooperation with Belarus: first, a concentration of the humanitarian efforts of the United Nations and other international and regional organizations on providing medical and other free assistance to the most affected groups of the population, namely, children, personnel involved in cleanup operations and inhabitants of evacuated areas; secondly, consolidation in the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations of a long-term policy approach to solving post-Chernobyl problems; thirdly, promotion of bilateral cooperation on Chernobyl between Belarus and donor countries as an additional basis for international research and practical projects; and, lastly, dissemination of balanced and objective information both among the affected population and throughout the world.

We believe that those proposals could contribute to an appropriate division of labour among the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system and the Organization's Secretariat, taking into account their individual advantages.

Programme of work

The Acting President: I should like to announce some additions to the programme of work of the General

Assembly which appeared in document A/INF/51/3/Rev.1/Add.2.

On Wednesday, 27 November, in the morning, the General Assembly will take up agenda item 42, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity", agenda item 26, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization", and agenda item 159, entitled "Elimination of coercive economic measures as a means of political and economic compulsion".

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.